Celebration Sunday - Broken Barriers – Ephesians 2:13-16 – November 1, 2026

Welcome to Celebration Sunday – We turn nine years old today!

- I'm so proud of the work we've done over the past 9 years
- Today we are going to install eleven new members – One baptism – One PCCD

Membership Explanation

- As more and more people make a formal commitment to membership here at Vertical, it's important to emphasize its purpose so as not to dilute its effect.
- Bible doesn't say much about how to formally express our commitment to one another in the body of Christ…
- Commitment is obvious there – we belong together in mutual partnership.
- So at Vertical, we have chosen to express that commitment in a formal, public way through membership.
- We live in a society where few make commitments and even fewer keep them
- And a formal membership helps to counter that, and actually solidify our commitments
- It also serves to tighten our bond between each other, and increase our unity…
- Moving us from mere spectates, to participants

Have all members stand…

That said…if this is you desire and intent you will respond 'I have' or 'I will'

1. I have, by faith, become a follower of Jesus Christ, and I have been baptized as a visible way of demonstrating that commitment…'I have'
2. I will, with God's help, seek to maintain my consistent disciplines of prayer, Bible study, quietness with God, and worship attendance…'I will'
3. I will, with God's direction, pursue an active role in building up the body of Christ at Vertical Church Albuquerque…'I will'
4. I will commit to neither gossip, nor listen to gossip concerning any member(s) of this body and will, when personally offended, speak directly and lovingly to those involved…'I will.
5. I will financially support the ministries of Vertical Church Albuquerque by faithfully giving back to the Lord a biblical portion of my increase…'I will'
6. I will support our members to be fully vested in God's work as I possibly can…'I will'
7. I will support our members in living up these commitments in the strength God provides…'I will'

- It is my privilege to welcome you to membership here at Vertical Church Albuquerque

We praise God for you…we're excited to partner and build up the body of Christ with

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Baptism…what it is and what it does:

1. Baptism Expresses our Faith
2. Baptism is a Picture of our Salvation
3. Baptism Reflects our Obedience
4. Baptism Encourages Fellow Believers
5. Baptism Challenges those apart from Christ
6. Baptism Glorifies God

RUSTY MOCK

3 Things are happening:

1. Parents are dedicating their children to the Lord

- Recognizing that they are a gift from God (Ps 127:3),

2. Parents are committing to raise them according to the principles of God's Word

- Or as Eph 6:4 says – to *bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*
- According to God's way of living and thinking, as found in the Bible

3. We're committing to help them as a church

- To come along side them – to support, encourage, and spur them on
- Having said that, it's important to understand – ***this dedication doesn't save them***
- Nor does it indicate or foretell their salvation to be confirmed later in life
- The Bible says that salvation comes only through personal faith in Jesus Christ
- Parents making a commitment to do everything they can to *show* Christ to their kids
- So that hopefully, when they understand, they too will give their lives to the Lord

Intro each family/child

Juan and Ari and their daughter Eliana Lovato – Born March 8, 2026

- **Her name means God has answered, and song of rejoicing**

James 1:17 - [7] Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change

- Based on your desire to dedicate your children to the Lord . . .
  - Is it your commitment to raise them according to the principles of his Word . . .
  - We're committed to helping you
- And look forward to the day when your child embraces Jesus Christ as their Lord/Savior

Open bible to Ephesians 2:13-16 – Talking about Broken Barriers that Christ has mended

In 1983, a severe flood destroyed a bridge that connected two communities

- What had once been a simple journey between neighbors became a difficult obstacle
- People who lived only a short distance apart were suddenly separated by a barrier

Think about what happens when a bridge is destroyed

- People may want to reach the other side, but desire alone cannot close the gap

Someone must rebuild the connection - This illustrates our relationship with God

Sin created a separation between us and our Creator that we could never repair

We could try to be good enough, work hard enough, or become religious enough, but none of those things could remove our guilt before a holy God

- But God did what we could never do for ourselves – Sent His Son to die on a Cross
- Through His sacrifice, Christ provided the way for sinful people to be reconciled to God

The cross did not simply make the gap smaller – The bridge has been rebuilt

Big Idea - The cross of Christ destroyed every barrier between God and man

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of
Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the
dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he
might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us
both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

Paul reminds us of the incredible work Jesus accomplished through His death on the cross

- Before Christ, we were separated from God and divided from one another
- Jesus brought those far away near and made peace between people who were divided
- The cross of Jesus Christ did more than provide forgiveness for individual sinners
  - It brought people together who were once separated
  - Restored a relationship with God that sin had destroyed

Today, we will consider three barriers that the cross of Christ removes

1. The Cross Removes Our Distance from God (Ephesians 2:13)

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

a. Before Christ, we were spiritually far from God

- Our sin separated us from God…there was a chasm too wide for us to cross
  - Ephesians 2:1 describes us as dead in our trespasses and sins
- Our greatest problem was not that we lacked information, education, or opportunity
  - People thing their greatest problem is money – health – family…It's Sin
  - Our greatest problem was that our sin separated us from our Creator

Sin creates a separation that human effort cannot overcome

We may attempt to compensate for our failures by attending church, serving others, giving money, or trying to live morally

Those things can have value, but they cannot pay the penalty for our sin

Too many people trying to live good lives to get into Heaven…need to bow the knee Christ

b. Christ brought us near through His blood - been brought near by the blood of Christ

- Brought Near = Those two words announce a dramatic change
  - We were far off, but now we have been brought close to God

How did that happen? Not through our goodness, but through Christ's blood

- Jesus took our sin upon Himself and bore the judgment we deserved
- Through His sacrificial death, He made a way for sinners to be reconciled to a holy God

We are brought near through the finished work of Jesus Christ – Owe a Debt

Jesus paid a debt He did not own because we have a debt we cannot pay

c. The Cross Removes Our Division from Others (Ephesians 2:14–15)

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the
dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he
might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,

- Paul declares that Christ Himself is our peace…doesn't just give…is our peace
- Jesus broke down the dividing wall of hostility between groups had been separated
- In the original setting, there was deep hostility between Jews and Gentiles
  - The Jews had received God's covenant promises and the Law…Gentiles outside

Jews avoided close social contact Gentiles because viewed them as ceremonially unclean

- Some would avoid entering a Gentile's home because they feared becoming defiled

The Jerusalem temple contained a physical barrier called the Soreg

- It separated the Court of the Gentiles from the inner temple courts
- Gentiles could enter the outer court but were forbidden from going beyond that barrier
- Warning inscriptions threatened death for Gentiles who crossed into the restricted area

For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility – Jesus has broken down the walls of division…The Ground is Level at the Cross

Paul explains that Jesus came to create one new humanity in Himself

The ground at the foot of the cross is level. No ethnicity, social status, background, or personal achievement gives someone greater access to salvation than another

- **Reject prejudice and pride** - Never treat person as less valuable b/c their background
- **Receive believers as family** - Make room for Christians whose personalities, experiences, and preferences differ from your own.

Paul shows us the ultimate purpose of the cross: reconciliation

d. The Cross Reconciles Us to God (Ephesians 2:16)

16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

a. Christ reconciled us through His death

- Paul explains that Jesus reconciled both Jews and Gentiles to God through the cross

Reconciliation means restoring a relationship that has been broken

- Sin created hostility between humanity and God…we were enemies of God
- Jesus took the punishment for our sin and made peace possible through His sacrifice

Notice Paul does not point to human achievement, religious traditions, or good intentions

He points directly to the cross

b. Christ brought us together in one body - might reconcile to God in one body through the cross

- The church is not supposed to be divided by the distinctions that separate people

Do you know what separates us from the millions of other churches in the world…nothing

Do you know what unites us all…one thing…the gospel of Jesus Christ

From here to Bora Bora… we are all united by the cross of Jesus Christ…One Body

- Through Christ, Jewish and Gentile believers became members of one spiritual family

Our unity not based on having same background, personality, preferences, or experiences

Our unity is based on having the same Savior

c. Christ put hostility to death - thereby killing the hostility.

- Paul finishes by emphasizing that Jesus killed the hostility through the cross
- God and gives us a new foundation for relationships with one another

Hostility once divided people no longer has the right to define those who belong to Christ

- **Rest in Christ's Peace** - Stop trying to earn God's acceptance…trust in the finished work
- **Reflect Christ's Unity** - Tear down the walls of bitterness, prejudice, and division
- **Remember Christ's Reconciliation** – You have been purchased…never forget it